

## GERD

**GERD** or Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (also known as **acid reflux**) happens when the muscle at the end of the esophagus (throat) does not close properly at the stomach. This allows stomach contents to leak back, or reflux, into the throat and cause irritation.

### **Your symptoms may be:**

- A burning sensation in the chest or throat called heartburn
- Tasting stomach fluid in the back of the mouth
- A dry cough, hoarse voice, asthma symptoms, or trouble swallowing, particularly when lying down.

### **Certain foods and drinks may cause or aggravate your GERD symptoms:**

- Alcohol & caffeine
- Citrus & acidic fruits
- Fatty or fried foods
- Garlic & onions
- Spicy foods
- Tomatoes & tomato based foods (spaghetti sauce, chili, pizza)
- Vinegar
- Mint

Your symptoms may be relieved by eating smaller, more frequent meals, rather than 3 large meals a day. Avoid eating or drinking 3-4 hours before bedtime to allow the stomach to empty before lying down.

For nighttime symptoms, a wedge pillow may safely elevate your head and prevent reflux from entering your throat.

Weight loss through a moderate exercise regimen can assist in reducing symptoms if you are overweight. Wearing loose-fitting clothing and belts may be beneficial.

If you smoke, quitting may alleviate your symptoms.

### **You may require medication to relieve GERD.**

One medication, **antacids**, may relieve mild symptoms and are available over the counter. Antacids should be taken about 1 hour after eating or at the time you usually experience reflux. If you are using antacids for nighttime symptoms do **NOT** take them with food.

Antacids can change the way your body absorbs other medicines. It is best to take any other medications 1 hour before or 4 hours after you take antacids. You should speak with your healthcare provider before changing your medication regimen.

If you are using antacids most days, you should speak with your healthcare provider as you may need additional medications. These medications, **Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) or Histamine Type 2 Receptor Antagonists (H2 blockers or H2RAs)**, cause your stomach to produce less acid and are longer acting than antacids. These medications are taken on a regular basis as they work to prevent reflux symptoms.

For more information visit: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/gerd.html>